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ORGANIZATION OF THE WORK OF THE SESSION

Note verbale dated 2 April 1996 from the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations Office at Geneva, addressed to the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights

The Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations Office and Other International Organizations at Geneva presents its compliments to the Chairman of the fifty-second session of the Commission on Human Rights and has the honour to request the circulation of the enclosed text* of the televised address of the President of the Russian Federation to the citizens of the Russian Federation as a document of the session of the Commission.-

* The annex is reproduced as received in the language of submission only.

Annex

Just as I promised, today, 31 March, I shall now acquaint you with a programme to settle the crisis in the Chechen Republic, a crisis that assumed the form of an armed conflict more than a year ago.

In view of the exceptional importance of the document, I have decided to read it out in the presence of journalists and then answer their questions.

The Chechen crisis is the hardest problem of Russia. There has not been and there is no simple way to resolve the conflict. It took a good deal of time to study attentively all the proposals and judge possible options for our actions and their consequences.

Two commissions have been set up with the participation of highly qualified experts. Their work has resulted in a programme for a settlement of the crisis in the Chechen Republic. The programme was discussed by Russia's Security Council twice and, following elaboration, was adopted.

Now this programme takes effect.

The programme presupposes a system of measures. They all are aimed at restoring peace, tranquillity and stability in the Chechen Republic.

The programme will be implemented through the joint efforts of federation and republic power bodies, with support and assistance from all subjects of the Federation and the entire population.

First, in keeping with the programme, all troop operations on the territory of Chechnya shall be terminated from 2400 hours on 31 March.

It must be emphasized that the actions of troops have promoted the creation of the necessary prerequisites for a fundamental change in the situation.

Federal forces are beginning to withdraw stage by stage from the tranquil areas of Chechnya to its administrative borders. A scheme for the redeployment of troops has been prepared.

Simultaneously, the Chechen leadership will work to broaden the zones of accord, security and peace in the Chechen Republic. Such zones now account for almost two thirds of the Republic's territory.

Undoubtedly, we shall not put up with terrorist acts and shall respond to them adequately. The safety of Russian citizens shall be ensured stringently.

But these actions may not and shall not be a substitute for political solutions, which are provided for by the programme.

Therefore, the second task is to prepare and hold free democratic elections to the Republic's Parliament throughout Chechnya, a Parliament in which the interests of the entire population of Chechnya should be represented.

An important stage in preparation for the elections will be the convocation of a peaceful political forum of representatives of the people of the Chechen Republic - from all its districts, towns and large villages - soon.

Representatives of federation and republic power bodies should participate in the work of the forum.

The election of a Parliament will be an important step in recreating State power bodies in the Chechen Republic.

Much has already been done in this respect. As the system of power grows stronger in Chechnya, responsibility for and the powers to finally settle the situation devolve from the Government of the Russian Federation to the Head, Government and Parliament of the Chechen Republic.

This process should be sealed by a treaty on the delimitation of jurisdiction and powers between the power bodies of the Russian Federation and the Chechen Republic.

In the coming months, the two sides are to set about resolving the third issue, which has been and still remains the main stumbling-block: the peculiarities of the status of the Chechen Republic.

The issue should be the subject of a businesslike and constructive dialogue between federal power bodies and plenipotentiary representatives of the people of the Chechen Republic.

The more so as the Constitution of Russia stipulates that status may be changed by mutual agreement between Russia and the subjects of the Federation themselves.

I think, that the normalization of the situation in the Republic and the establishment of peace, tranquillity and stability there are the principal condition to start getting agreement on the status of Chechnya. For the sake of that, we are prepared to go to talks with the Dudayev side through go-betweens.

Cooperation among all branches of federal power is an important condition for a settlement of the Chechen crisis.

With this end in view, the Government of the Russian Federation has been directed to form a State Commission jointly with the Houses of the Federal Assembly for control over the settlement of the situation in the Chechen Republic.

The Commission is to be chaired by Viktor Chernomyrdin.

Among the measures aimed at achieving peace in Chechnya is a proposal that the State Duma consider an amnesty for participants in the armed actions in the Republic, with the exception of those who committed grave crimes.

The programme envisages a radical change in the manner of distributing the financial and material resources sent to the Chechen Republic. At present, the resources quite often never reach those who need them most of all.

The Government has been ordered to inquire into abuses and ensure the provision of strictly targeted assistance for the Republic. The assistance will be given only to those districts and populated areas where the situation gets stabilized.

The adopted programme contains specific measures to put an end to the armed confrontation and channel the conflict into a peaceful dialogue on the status of Chechnya.

A large amount of work has to be done to implement the programme. But I believe that the work will be crowned with success, first of all because peace, tranquillity and security are essential for the Chechen people and for all the peoples of Russia.

We, together with the military, are firmly intent on securing a peaceful settlement of the issue.